

Christianity and

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Religiosity and the Christian Faith

A VISITOR to our shores would probably come to the same conclusion at which St. Paul arrived in regard to the Athenians, namely, that we are "very religious." But the judgment might not imply a compliment any more than Paul wanted to so imply when he called attention to the worship of many gods in Athens, including the "unknown god." Our religiosity seems to have as little to do with the Christian faith as the religiosity of the Athenians.

The "unknown god" in America seems to be faith itself. Our politicians are always admonishing the people to have "faith." Sometimes they seem to imply that faith is itself redemptive. Sometimes this faith implies faith in something. That something is usually an idol, rather than the "God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ," who both judges and has mercy upon sinful men and nations. Sometimes we are asked to have faith in ourselves, sometimes to have faith in humanity, sometimes to have faith in America. Sometimes it is hope, rather than faith, which is really intended. We are to have hope that we will win the cold war or that the cold war will not break out into an atomic conflict.

These provisional hopes are no doubt rather better than despair, for desperate actions and policies are generated in despair. But the objects of faith are almost always idolatrous. For whether it is in ourselves, or in mankind, or in civilization, or in America, that we are asked to have faith, the admonition always points to an object of faith which is less than God and which certainly does not deserve unreserved commitment or adoration. The question is whether a generation which has lost its faith in all the gods of the nineteenth century, that is, in "history," or "progress," or "enlightenment," or the "perfectibility of man," is not expressing its desire to believe in something, to be committed somehow, even though it is not willing to be committed to a God who can be known only through repentance, and whose majesty judges all human pretensions. It is precisely faith in this God which is avoided in all this religiosity. A nation as powerful and fortunate as ours is not inclined to worship a God before whom "the nations are as a drop in the bucket,"

and "who bringeth princes to naught." Our modern religiosity, in short, expresses various forms of self-worship. It is a more specifically religious ethos than the so-called "secular" faiths which history in our tragic age has refuted. The strategy seems to be to bring the discredited pagan gods in Christian disguises, hoping that the traditional piety may be merged with the secular forms of self-confidence.

The cause of this procedure seems to be that we are so sure of ourselves, of our power and of our virtue, and yet we are not sure of our destiny at all. We live on the edge of an abyss, and at any moment our private securities may be swallowed in the world-wide insecurity. The religiosity which seems to correspond to this combination of self-esteem and anxiety would seem to be a secular faith clothed in traditional terms. The most disquieting aspect of such religiosity is that it is frequently advanced by popular leaders of the Christian church, and is not regarded as a substitute, but as an interpretation of that faith. The gospel admonition, "Repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," this challenge to submit all our achievements and ambitions and hopes to a much higher judge than those judges who support our self-esteem, this admonition would seem to have little affinity with the "power of positive thinking."

It is significant that while this modern religiosity makes for self-esteem, particularly collective self-esteem, the nation is helped to find and to hold its rightful place in the perilous position of leadership in the alliance of free nations by many shrewd and critical "secular" thinkers who help us to weigh our responsibilities and judge the hazards of the task in which we are engaged. One must come to the conclusion that religion per se and faith per se are not virtuous, or a cause of virtue. The question is always what the object of worship is, and whether the worship tends to break the pride of the self so that a truer self may arise, either individually or collectively. If worship and faith do not serve this rebirth of men and of nations they are the source of confusion. We can therefore take no satisfaction in the prevailing religiosity of our nation. Much of

it is a perversion of the Christian Gospel. It aggravates, rather than mitigates, the problems of a very successful people.

It will be remembered that the prophet Jeremiah was worried about the false prophets who did not speak "the word of the Lord" but spoke their own dreams and imaginations. He had a test for detecting false prophecy. The false prophet was one who accentuated complacency and promised those who despised God, "you shall have assured peace in this place." It is as difficult in our day as in the day of Jeremiah to preach "the word of the Lord," for that runs counter to the complacency of men and of nations. It is sharper than a "two-edged sword." It must hurt before it can heal. R. N.

EDITORIAL NOTES

The President's address to Congress, in its main outlines and in its spirit, deserved to be favorably received by both parties. It is strongest on international affairs where the President is most at home and where he quite clearly stands for a position of his own which he has had to defend courageously against a powerful section of his own party and even against members of his own administration, especially Admiral Radford. The President is now with quiet dignity exercising real leadership in this area. He knows that a general war with nuclear weapons cannot preserve any of the things for which it might be fought and that it is not a thinkable alternative to a policy of "competitive co-existence." The nation, however, will want to know whether, in spite of the President's recognition of this, he has not consented to a military policy which, through drastic reduction of army personnel, may put too much emphasis on nuclear weapons. This is one of the points on which our minds should be open during the Congressional debates. We may be thankful that the President is so loyal to the United Nations, so determined to avoid dictating to our allies, and that he combines firmness in regard to the Communist issue with a growing readiness to take advantage of any opportunity that may appear in the situation for negotiation.

* * *

The Reporter (January 19th) has one of the best articles about the senior editor of this journal which have ever appeared in print. Prof. William Miller, who seems to be *The Reporter's* expert on religion, has written two brilliant articles which appear in the same issue, one on Reinhold Niebuhr and the other on Norman Vincent Peale. They provide an illuminating study in comparative religion. The success of Dr. Peale is one of the phenomena of this age.

Whatever may be said about people who have been helped by his personal ministry or by many excellent aspects of the program of his church, the fact that he is the most popular representative of Protestantism on television and through his writings means that the public is getting a profoundly distorted view of Christianity from his message. The National Council of Churches sponsors Dr. Peale's television program and has helped to build him up as the most popular spokesman of Protestantism to the nation as a whole. This seems to many of us to be a serious, even a shocking error. As Simeon Stylites says so well in *The Christian Century*, the error in this emphasis upon "positive thinking" is that it forgets that Christian positive thinking presupposes Christian negative thinking in the form of repentance.

* * *

In this issue we are publishing an article by Professor Robert Handy in which he compares the recent statement on "Christian Principles and Assumptions for Economic Life" with "The Social Ideals of the Churches" (The Social Creed of the Churches), which was the earlier expression of the conscience of American Protestantism on social issues. Professor Handy is an authority on the history of social thought in American Protestantism and his comparison is illuminating and, on the whole, encouraging. It should be said here that the adoption of this statement on Christian Principles by the General Board of the National Council of Churches last September was a landmark in the history of the Council. Action had been postponed several times over a period of more than a year because the statement was opposed by an organized group of laymen who represent the most dogmatic form of economic individualism. Actually this conservative pressure group could not command more than five or six votes in the General Board, but there was great hesitancy in overriding them, and one weakness of the process by which this statement was formulated is that almost all the changes that were made during the long period of postponement were in one direction in order to meet the objections of this quite unrepresentative group.

Yet, on the main issues, which were the refusal of the writers to say that capitalism is the universal Christian economic system and their insistence on the importance of the role of the state in economic life, no fundamental concessions were made. The absolute economic individualism of the journal, *Christian Economics*, and of such organizations as Spiritual Mobilization, is decisively rejected.

J. C. B.

From "Social Ideals" to "Norms for Guidance"

ROBERT T. HANDY

WHAT is happening to the social concerns of the churches in these days in which reactions of various kinds against the liberal moods of recent decades are widely in evidence? Especially with respect to the crucial area of economic life, what are the conspicuous trends? A quarter century ago Christians who were especially interested in bringing the insights of their faith to bear on social and economic life were almost always liberals in their viewpoint; today a sheaf of periodicals of varying types remind us that this is no longer true and that many whose position could not be described as liberal are much concerned with the social relevance of Christian faith. A quarter century ago the Federal Council of Churches was fulfilling its role of teacher of social ethics to American Protestantism; it was serving to liberalize the attitudes of individuals and churches with respect to social-economic matters. Today the Federal Council has merged with a dozen other interdenominational agencies in the much vaster, more representative National Council of Churches. Will the National Council also be able to serve a prophetic and creative role in guiding Christian people in their economic thinking?

We now have a yardstick which we can set against a comparable measure of past years in seeking at least partial answers to these important questions. On September 15, 1954, the National Council's policy-making General Board adopted, by a decisive 77-4 vote, a 4,000 word statement entitled "Christian Principles and Assumptions for Economic life." The statement came as the climax of a long process of study, debate, modification, and revision. The heart of the pronouncement is the presentation of thirteen "norms for guidance" of Christians in their judgment of economic institutions and practices.

Some twenty-two years before, in 1932, the Quadrennial Meeting of the Federal Council had adopted a somewhat longer statement, "Social Ideals of the Churches." The heart of that statement was a seventeen-point summary which listed the "social ideals" the churches should stand for with respect to social and economic questions. This summary was a revision of the so-called "social creed of the churches" which had been originally adopted at the time of the Council's founding in 1908 and readopted in expanded form in 1912—it also was the result of a long process of refinement.

A comparison of these two statements, each with its series of articles crystallizing its main contentions, should give us some sense of the overall trend of social-economic thought in American Protestantism. To be sure, the earlier statement dealt with a

wider range of issues than the latter, for its focus was not concentrated on matters economic. Nevertheless a dozen of the seventeen "social ideals" of 1932 did deal directly with economic life, and in the larger statement, which provides the context for the summary articles, the emphasis is on economic and industrial relations. A comparison is therefore legitimate and revealing.

Each of the statements, of course, was influenced by the mood of the time in which it was written. The "social ideals" were issued in a time of depression, the "norms for guidance" in a time of prosperity. The "social ideals" were framed at a time when it was generally believed that international peace was quite secure, the "norms for guidance" at a time when war is an imminent possibility. The "social ideals" were prepared in a period when the thought of the country as a whole was moving in a liberal direction generally, the "norms for guidance" in a period in which a more conservative mood is felt. The twenty-two years between the two declarations were fateful ones indeed—they saw the rise of Hitler, the second World War, the inauguration of the atomic age, the emergence of Russia as a world power. Domestically, they saw the New Deal and the Fair Deal, the emergence of "big labor," the reversal of the agricultural depression. Ecclesiastically, they saw the impact of the theological renaissance and the ecumenical revival. All this has meant startling change, crowded into little more than two decades!

In view of the sweeping transformations between 1932 and 1954, the similarities between the two statements are particularly significant. The parallels that can be drawn are many; excerpts from one can be matched by excerpts from the other. These similarities bear clear witness to an uninterrupted Christian social witness in intensely dynamic decades. The social ideals spoke of the obligation of both employers and employees "to work for the public good"; the "norms for guidance" look toward "a sound economy which seeks the maximum welfare of the greatest number of people." The 1932 document stood for the "subordination of speculation and the profit motive to the creative and cooperative spirit," while that of 1954 asks that economic motives "be kept in harmony with concern for the welfare of the community" and declares that the Church should criticize strongly any economic institutions and practices which emphasize self-interest above social responsibility. The early thirties were troubled by unemployment and called for social insurance; the middle fifties declares outright that "large-scale un-

employment, or long-continued unemployment for any considerable number of persons able and willing to work is intolerable," and adds that "all practical safeguards should be provided and maintained." The Federal Council statement indicated that the churches should stand for the right of all to opportunity for self-maintenance with a living wage as a minimum standard; the National Council declaration states that "Christians should work for a situation wherein all have access at least to a minimum standard of living."

Both documents are positively clear in their stand against racial discrimination: the former asked for "justice, opportunity, and equal rights for all, mutual goodwill and cooperation among racial, economic, and religious groups;" the latter maintains that "it is a clear Christian responsibility to work against those special forms of economic injustice that are expressed through racial and other group discrimination." Both proclamations are concerned with the ill, the incapacitated, and the aged. Both statements speak for the younger members of society. The first asks for the abolition of child labor and for adequate provision for the protection, education, spiritual nurture and wholesome recreation of every child. The second boldly proclaims that "all youth should have the right to equal opportunities to develop their capacities, in so far as society can provide them, through equal access to the means of health, education and employment." Protection of the family is featured in both pronouncements—most comprehensively in the "norms for guidance": "Economic institutions should be judged also by their impact upon the family—which involves standards of living, hours of labor, stability of employment, provision for housing, and the planning of cities, especially in their relation to their industrial development and the elimination of blighted areas." Both declarations are aware of the world context of economic decisions: the one affirming that "the economic order . . . is fundamentally international"; the other elucidating the theme that "Christian responsibility for economic life must take into account also the needs of the whole world." Both are concerned about the defense of freedom: 1932 stood for the recognition and maintenance of free speech, free assembly, and a free press; 1954 explains that "economic institutions should not restrict political freedom of any person and their participation in the common life." Both positions envision some role for government in economic affairs. The earlier statement several times suggested a larger role for government as one way of approaching some of the difficult economic problems. The later one takes for granted governmental concern in matters economic, and to those who feel that a maximum of individual economic freedom will by itself

create the economic conditions that contribute to a good society it declares that "the weight of evidence shows that some use of government in relation to economic activities is essential to provide the environment in which human freedom can flourish."

Thus there is a clear continuity of social-economic teaching in these two carefully-drafted epitomes. Many of the seeds that the social gospel generation planted have taken firm root, and though the tree may have been shaken in the wind and had a few of its boughs lopped off, it has not been uprooted.

The similarities are striking, yet the differences are perhaps even more so, especially at first glance. The similarities have here been emphasized first because to some they may be less obvious, though I think more fundamental. In speaking of differences I am not primarily referring to items included in 1932 and omitted in 1954. Some of the goals, such as the responsibility of the government for the protection of individuals in time of depression, are now generally accepted. But in tone and terminology the statements reveal that they arise from contexts quite different both theologically and politically. One moves into a different atmosphere in passing from one document to the other.

The theological basis of the "Social Ideals of the Churches" is scarcely articulated. It is declared that "the supreme spiritual and ethical authority of Jesus is assumed." It is said that the ideals are felt to be "in essential harmony with prophetic and apostolic teachings" and that "their authority and inspiration is to be found in the way of life which Jesus taught and exemplified." On the whole it seems fair to say that the statement is predicated largely on social idealist premises of a nature more generally religious than explicitly Christian. "The Christian social ideal is one of a good life, abundant, progressive, and generously devoted to human welfare—a life lived 'under the eye and by the strength of God.'" But after that early reference to God, he is not mentioned again until the closing peroration. The report assumes that a vastly better social-economic order is possible and that men have the resources for realizing it if only they will manifest a new dedication to the common good with courage and unselfishness.

The recent "Christian Principles and Assumptions for Economic Life" with its "norms for guidance" has, however, a rather careful, though condensed, outline of the theological premises on which it rests. The section of the report entitled "Fundamental Religious and Ethical Assumptions" begins as follows: "God as we know him through Christ is the God of history, of nations and peoples, as well as of individual souls. It is his will that his Kingdom be realized among men and that his lordship be acknowledged over all principalities and powers,

over every department of life, including economic institutions and practices." It goes on to emphasize that all the resources of the earth are gifts of God, and to declare that every form of ownership or use of possessions should be kept under scrutiny that it may not distort the purposes of God's creation. In capsule form it enunciates a Christian doctrine of man: "All men are created in the image of God; and, though they are in history, sinful and rebellious as the slaves of their own self-will, God seeks to redeem them from their self-centeredness. Men experience freedom in the measure in which they are willing to become God's servants, and to allow God as revealed in Christ to become the center of their lives and the pattern of their living." This is the teaching, it is asserted, which provides the Christian basis for belief in the dignity and possibilities of all persons. Economic institutions and practices should always serve the whole man.

Each paragraph of this important theological section concludes with a Biblical quotation. The theological interest pervades the entire statement; its conclusion, for example, emphasizes that the attitude of the Christian as he confronts economic problems grows out of his faith in God's righteousness and love. "Two attitudes should be emphasized: (1) love that takes the form of sensitive concern for the welfare of all persons and that seeks to raise the level of justice in economic institutions; (2) humility that comes when the Christian sees himself and his own social group under the judgment of God." The whole effort is clearly informed by the theological renaissance and the ecumenical revival, and reminds us that Oxford and Edinburgh, Amsterdam—and Evanston!—took place between the two publications.

The shift in theological emphasis becomes quite clear when the two documents are put side by side. The earlier statement viewed the Church, for example, largely as a social institution having as its objective the more abundant economic, cultural and spiritual life of humanity; the later one speaks of the Church as Christ's body, and emphasizes as its primary role a ministry to individuals. The pronouncement of 1932, in keeping with its social idealist premises, puts its primary emphasis on the social dimension. It of course sought to magnify the place of the individual, but always the attempt revealed its preference for the social. "While the Christian ideal thus demands the new and better social order which is made possible by the techniques of modern science, it has always a message of hope and consolation for those who are troubled and perplexed: a gospel of joy and strength, and deliverance from temptation. The social gospel emphasizes and magnifies the individual and his personal needs." The emphasis is reversed in the 1954 statement which

opens with the words, "The Christian churches have as a prime objective their ministry to individuals, and therefore have also a basic relationship to the society which they seek to serve." Throughout the paper the emphasis is on the individual Christian's decisions and judgments in matters economic. The "norms for guidance" are designed precisely to help him and to assist the Church to help him with them. This throws much more emphasis upon the layman. "The Church must make its influence felt in economic life chiefly through the decisions of its laymen in their various occupations—as employers, as employees, as producers and consumers, and as citizens. The Christian is called to commit himself to God's purpose in every area of his life, and usually there is no more important area than his way of making a living. Each Christian needs to seek distinctive Christian guidance for his role in the economic order." The social dimension is certainly not neglected, but it is now seen in relation to the individual—it is the social responsibility of the individual that is stressed. It is because of their ministry to individuals that churches have a basic relationship to society.

The theological changes have, therefore, meant a considerable shift in emphasis from 1932 to 1954. But the changes in the political situation have had even greater impact—and to some extent, of course, the theological changes themselves reflect the changed world situation. The Federal Council's proclamation had an historical introduction which sought justification for its social ideals in the history of the original "social creed of the churches"—a history of ever wider acceptance and influence which gave confidence and assurance. The statement frankly looked toward more socialization: "The Christian ideal calls for hearty support of a planned economic system in which maximum social values shall be sought."

The framers of the National Council's pronouncement, however, could not so confidently appeal to history, for it had introduced a "complicating factor." As they express it, "There is a complicating factor, however, in the position of our American society in the world today. We believe that from the Christian standpoint free democratic institutions are clearly superior to any form of totalitarianism. But our way of life has been challenged by totalitarian philosophies and practices, especially communism, which are competing with it for the loyalty of men around the world." The statement explains that the emergence of a thoroughgoing collectivism shows that uncritical recourse to the state to remedy every evil creates its own evils, and may easily become a threat to freedom. "The union of political and economic power is a dangerous road, whether it leads toward complete state control of economic life or toward

control of the state by private centers of economic power."

The task of the Church that is faced with this situation is no longer seen as prophetic only, but as prophetic and *conserving*. Its responsibilities include not only the difficult tasks of criticism but also those of the conservation and promotion of such values as justice and freedom. The drafters of the 1932 statement assumed that these values were best secured by the prophetic approach; the framers of the 1954 principles believe that "in the present world situation there are real conflicts between such positive values as order and freedom, or order and justice, or justice and freedom." Hence there can be no completely "Christian" economic system, and Christians should seek such adjustments of economic institutions and practices as will serve most fully these three positive values. This means a balance between the prophetic and conserving roles of the Church must be struck; one must press on to better things, yet always be careful lest present gains be lost.

These insights, gleaned from the hard fields of mid-twentieth century reality, encouraged the writers to speak out against various misconceptions: that any particular economic system is ordained of God, that benevolent intentions justify domination by those who have superior status or power, that socialization of all the major means of production is the one sure road to economic justice, that a maximum of economic freedom will by itself create the economic conditions that contribute to a good society.

All this means that the 1954 document is marked in part by a somewhat negative tone whereas the earlier one was positive and confident. It means that it is characterized by a certain caution as it seeks to balance conflicting values, whereas the 1932 statement was more simple and direct. There is much greater appreciation of the present order, and concern lest it be impaired. The very first "norm for guidance" reads, "All ethical demands upon economic institutions must take account of the importance of efficiency and productivity in the satisfying of human needs, as essential marks of a sound economy which seeks the maximum welfare of the greatest number." The cautious quality of the "norms for guidance" shows at several other points, especially where demands of 1932 are not repeated. Both statements call for a living wage. The earlier one went on to call for "a wider and fairer distribution of wealth," and for "a just share for the worker in the product of industry and agriculture." The recent one notes the great contrasts between rich and poor and finds that they are dangerous in their undermining of equality of opportunity and in undercutting the political institutions of a responsible society. Then the attempt to balance conflicting claims becomes evident: "Some inequalities of wealth and in-

come are necessitated, in our society, both because of differences in service or function, and because of the great danger to freedom in trying to eliminate them completely. Christians should disapprove inequalities beyond the limits set by a broad view of justice and of the well-being of society. There is an unresolved dilemma here. On the one hand there is the Christian concern about injustice that may be involved in inequalities. On the other hand there is the need of the incentive to initiative and productivity that is provided when income varies with contribution. Christian scrutiny should accept the validity of this experience, but may well question many conventional appraisals of the value of a particular kind of contribution."

The statement's caution and search for balance could be illustrated in other ways. It commends a mixed economy in which there is a combination of individual freedom and social responsibility, along with a relationship between government and private or semi-private economic groups. The earlier statement demanded that cooperation supplant competition as the fundamental method; the later one makes place for the competitive urge while seeking to keep in harmony with concern for community welfare and the individual's sense of Christian vocation.

"Christian Principles and Assumptions for Economic Life" is a restrained document, and I suspect the judgment of some concerning it will also be restrained. It is reassuring to find that the prophetic task of the church is taken seriously at a time when self-criticism is all too easily misunderstood. There is no hesitation at this point: "Yet the churches dare not abandon the prophetic role. To do so would be to yield leadership for peace and freedom and justice and to disregard the churches' mandatory responsibility under the Gospel." It is reassuring to find also a refreshing theological seriousness. The prophetic role will in the long run be more significant and lasting if it does not stray from the only foundation upon which it should properly stand. It is reassuring also to find a political and economic realism—though this may mean that such pronouncements will be less sharp and uncompromising, it will also mean that they are coming more to grips with real issues. It is reassuring to find an emphasis on the role of the layman, and to admit that the technical elements in economic discussions call for special knowledge and competence.

It can scarcely be denied, however, that there is here and there in the statement an overly-realistic, unimaginative, earthbound quality that is a little disappointing. It may be that the negative and cautionary elements are a bit overdone in reaction against too unguarded manifestos in the past. It is hoped that later declarations will somehow capture the fine

elements of this one, yet be more positive and arresting. It is right that the norms for guidance insist that all ethical demands on economic institutions take account of the importance of efficiency and productivity. But it is unfortunate that this had to be said in the very first of the norms. Should not a Christian summary begin by affirming with some specificity what the ethical demands are, and what they mean? To be sure, the preamble speaks of justice, order, and freedom, but (as has already happened several times), the thirteen norms will often be separately published. To put the principles clearly first and then state the qualifications would have given the statement a more positive tone.

The recent statement is so aware of the way ideals have been misused that it seems to hesitate to invoke them even at points where their use is legitimate. Is there not always a place for holding up certain ideals against any given order as challenges—challenges

which Christian faith sets before all of us, challenges without which individual and social life would slip to lower levels? Despite the general prosperity, there are certain groups in our population at a serious economic disadvantage. There are pockets of real need which need be taken more seriously by industry, labor, and government, and the prophetic role of the Church would seem to demand it constantly point to such groups which may not be receiving a fair and just share of national wealth.

On the whole, "Christian Principles and Assumptions for Economic Life" is an encouraging statement. The trend from a socially-based idealism to a theologically-rooted realism is good; the attempt to balance the prophetic and conserving roles of the Church is important. The scales may have tipped too far one way in the "Social Ideals," and perhaps over-correction is to be expected. It has not broken the continuity of prophetic Christian social witness.

World Church: News and Notes

The following letter is a significant expression of the feelings of former victims of German aggression who take more seriously than we the dangers of a revived German army. Perhaps the effort to conform to communist politics is also evident. R.N.

The representatives of Protestant Churches in Czechoslovakia, disturbed by the evolution of the German problem, have decided to approach their German brethren, and indeed all Christians of the world, by the following letter:

To our German brethren:

At the Second General Assembly of the World Council of Churches we pledged to exercise our influence on the statesmen of our countries so that they do not cease discussing in common the difficult international questions and that they may seek their peaceful solution.

In these discussions it is necessary to carry out the agreements of the Great Powers after the Second World War that Germany should be liberated from its military and warlike tradition and that it should become an aid in the peaceful coexistence of nations of Europe and throughout the world. We consider it a great moral mistake to take a divided Germany as a starting point, and not an agreement for a new Germany. In spite of the dividing lines which separate us we recall the decision of our German brethren of 1945, when they expressed their regret for the events of the Second World War and their co-responsibility for it. They thereby pledged that they would work against anything which could bring on a new catastrophe. From the events of the last few months we see how urgent it is to exert every effort to thwart the plans leading to a new war conflict, which without doubt would make it impossible for our German brethren to work in the spirit of the resolution of 1945.

Therefore in these moments which, in our opinion,

are a decisive turning point in the history of our nations and of all mankind, profoundly disquieted by the development of present international events, we address ourselves to you, as Brothers in Christ, in order to share with you our fears and our tasks. In the last few days we again had the opportunity of observing serious efforts of statesmen who were discussing the peaceful coexistence of European nations and the peaceful solution of the German question, as well as the difficulties which lie in the path of the unification of Germany—and therefore we believe that this appeal is fully justified.

We who are united with the German people by centuries of the Reformation heritage desire nothing so ardently as for the consequences of the Second World War to be done away with and for a united Germany to take her rightful place in the family of peaceloving nations. But for this it is necessary not only for all people of good will, but especially the Christians, to do everything in order that a rearming of Western Germany be prevented, a rearmament which could lead to a new war.

We cannot be silent about the efforts of those circles which want to make of Western Germany a vast arsenal and a living threat for all of peaceloving Europe and mankind. The danger is all the greater because this terrible thought finds a positive response in those who long for a sanguinary revenge for the German defeat and the national catastrophe of 1945.

It is not egoistic or national reasons which lead us to make this warning. The world has become so small, because of technical development and economic interdependence, that the fate of no nation can be separated from the others. On the contrary, we are thinking of the immense suffering which our nations went through in the last war and we dread the thought that all this misery of war might again be repeated. In this we are in agreement with the representatives of German Protestantism. Not only the same confession of faith joins

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us with them, but also the same outlook on the present situation and personal brotherly relations. Like them we are seriously and morally disquieted by the development of contemporary events in the international field. Therefore, we need understanding and strengthening from all peaceloving people throughout the world.

Peace in the world is indivisible. Every threat of war in whatever form, every division of nations into the ruling and the ruled, affects all people throughout the world.

Today when we, as a result of the recent international discussions, find ourselves in a new situation, we must—and precisely as Christians—do everything to save the life of our neighbor, in order that in the hardness of

our own heart we might not share the guilt for the death of millions. Therefore we appeal to and call on all believing brothers and sisters, congregations and churches, to carry out concrete tasks, to collaborate purposefully and to preserve peace throughout the world.

Especially you, German brethren, influence your government and public opinion to prevent the rearming of Western Germany and avert the danger of war. You yourselves know, that a new war would mean a fratricidal war for you.

All our prayers for peace would, however, be empty and false, if we did not do everything in our strength for peace. The first thing is to win human hearts in our families, in our congregations and churches, at our places of work and among people in general for the idea of peace and for a friendly understanding among nations, devotedly and courageously to prevent all war psychosis, hostile calumnies and irresponsible fatalism which considers war as a fatal necessity in world development.

Finally we see that it is necessary for all Christian churches, and especially their leading representatives, to address an urgent peace appeal to the governments of their nations and tirelessly remind them of their prime responsibility in this question.

In our opinion no government deserves the name of "Christian government" which would be deaf to this appeal and would abuse the Christian name to cover its own un-Christian and military aims. Christ's command about peace also applies to responsible statesmen.

There is yet time. Therefore we ask you: Do not refuse our request, and join with us in order that our common efforts may help to assure a better future for mankind. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. 5:23.)

DR. VIKTOR HAJEK, Synodical Senior of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren

JAN CHABADA, the General Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Slovakia

IMRICH VARGA, Bishop of the Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia

DR. J. L. HROMADKA, Dean of the Comenius Theological Faculty in Prague

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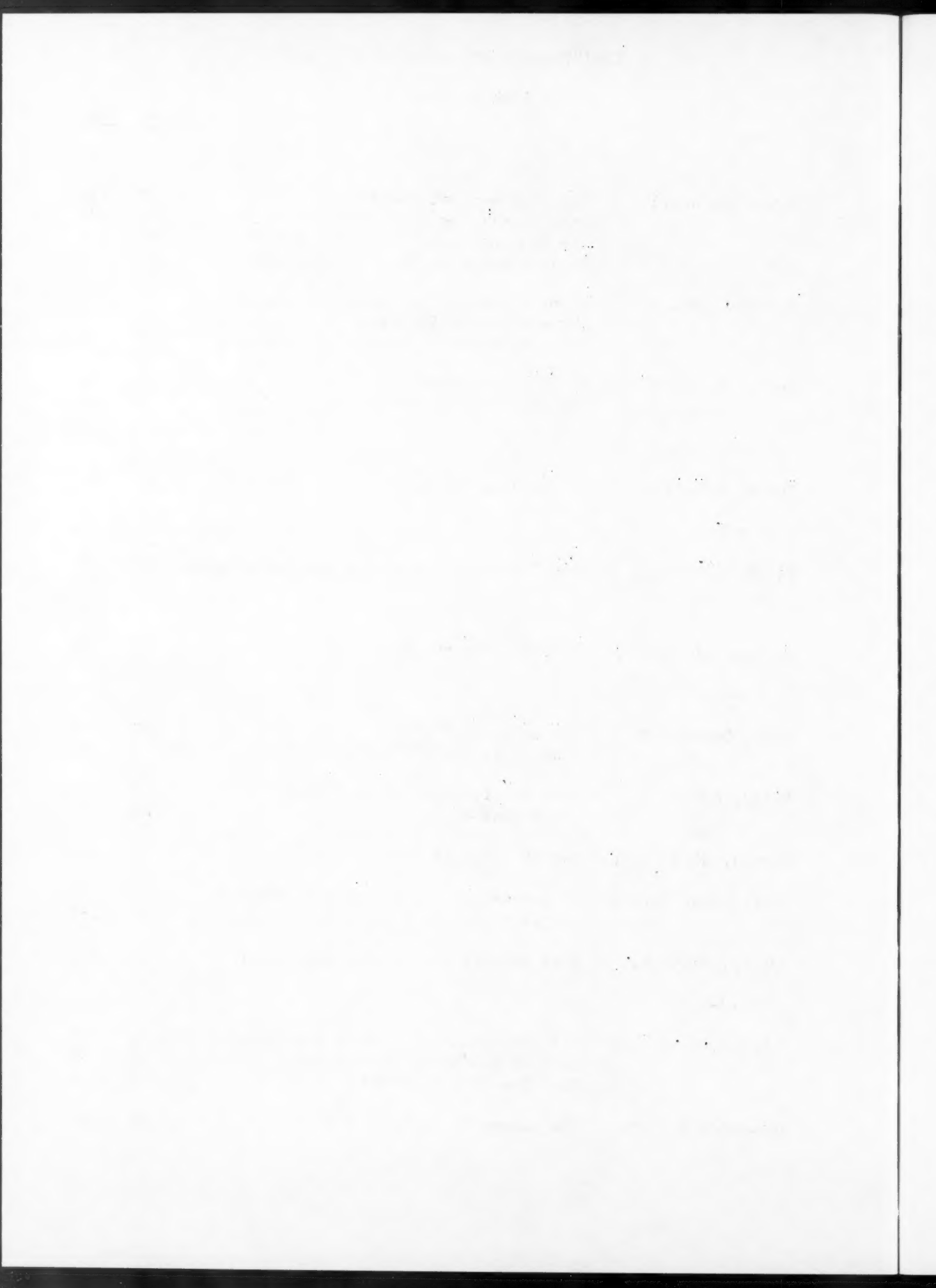
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FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT TO THE PRESENT TIME

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IN TWO VOLUMES

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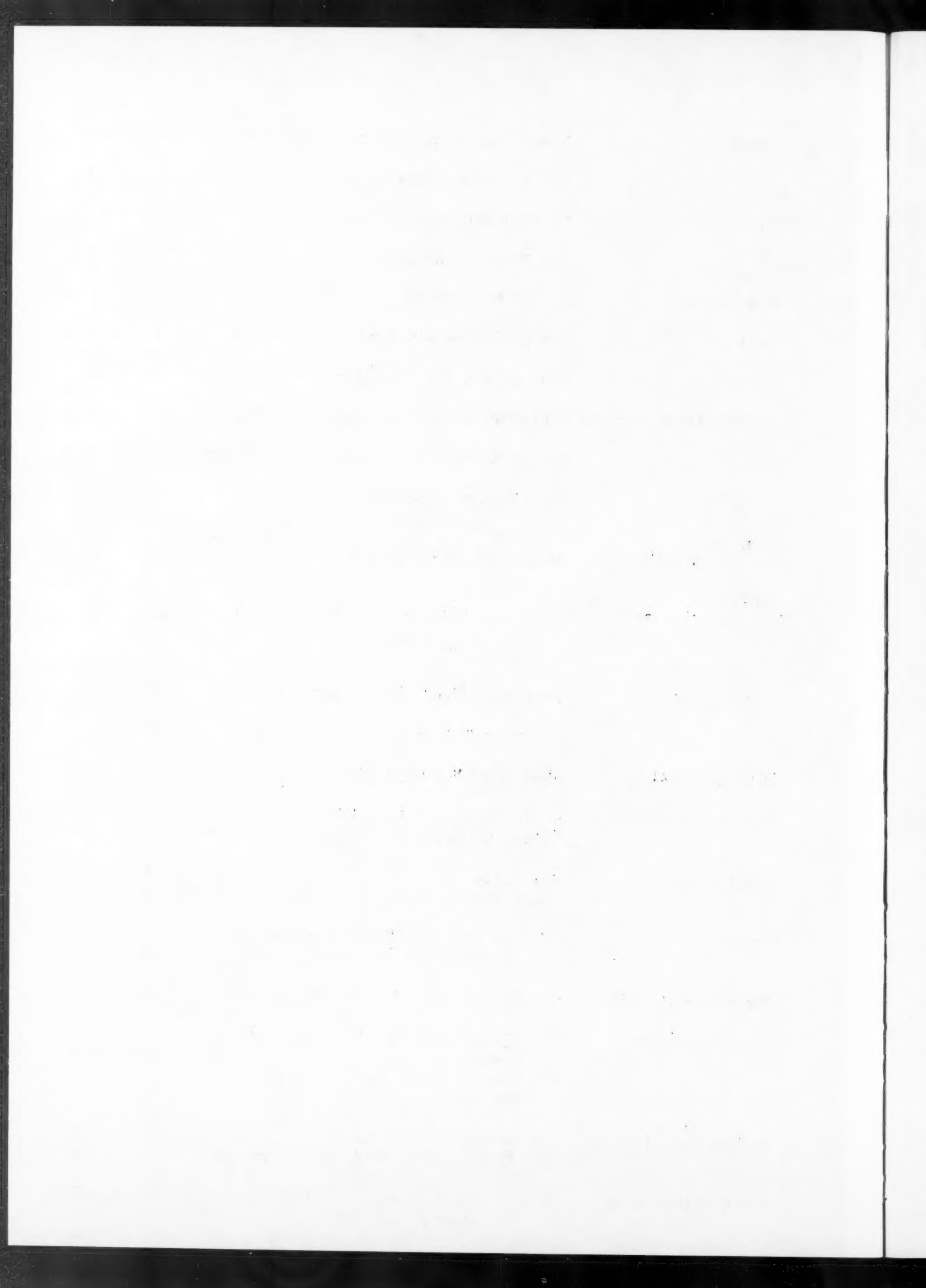
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